Robert Gordon's College Nursery
Day Care of Children

Robert Gordon College
Schoolhill
Aberdeen
AB10 1FE

Telephone: 01224 646 758

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 September 2026

Service provided by:
Robert Gordon's College

Service provider number:
SP2003003559

Service no:
CS2003016172

About the service

Robert Gordon's College Nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 64 children aged from three years to not yet attending primary school at any one time.

The service is situated in the city centre of Aberdeen, within the grounds of Robert Gordon's College. Children have access to a large open plan playroom, which has a dividing partition to create two smaller rooms, as well as a quiet room, kitchen, and enclosed outdoor space. Children make use of additional spaces, such as the dining hall, library, and playing fields at Countesswells.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 September 2026 between 09:30 and 17:00 and 16 September 2026 between 09:00 and 13:15. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with children using the service
- spoke with five of their parents/carers
- received eight responses to our request for feedback from parents/carers through our online questionnaire
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained, and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Children were happy, settled, and confident within the setting.
- Children and families felt included within the community of the whole school.
- Staff were kind and passionate about children's learning experiences.
- Children benefitted from regular access to outdoors, including the use of different spaces.
- Embedded self evaluation approaches supported the continuous cycle of improvement.
- Children accessed a wide variety of experiences which contained a balance of planned and spontaneous opportunities.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources
We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement. Therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

A clear set of school-wide vision, values, and aims underpinned practice within the setting. These were developed and reviewed in consultation with staff, children, and families. They were embedded in practice with a strong focus on 'community' and 'valuing learning through play'. This contributed to a welcoming and inclusive environment where children accessed a wide range of engaging learning experiences. Parents commented, "It is a community from the start" and "The nursery expose the children to lots of fun activities which [my child] can try."

Children and families had meaningful opportunities to influence change within the setting. Children's views were gathered throughout the day and reflected in their experiences. For example, children suggested having snack in a pirate ship and this had been created using cardboard boxes. Their views were recorded within group floor books. A parent advised, "My child enjoys sharing [their] ideas for learning in [their] group floor book. [They enjoy] asking questions and sharing [their] interests." Parents contributed through more formal engagement opportunities, including a working group, settling-in meetings, and questionnaires. Feedback from these approaches was used to inform improvement priorities, supporting a responsive approach.

Positive experiences for children were promoted through quality assurance practices. Effective self evaluation and use of quality audit tools highlighted strengths, as well as areas for development. The management team were keen to include staff in developments and were supporting this, using approaches such as audits of practice, peer monitoring, and working group meetings. This helped maintain and support the delivery of quality care for children.

An improvement plan identified realistic priorities and supported a manageable pace of change. This enabled staff to work collaboratively towards shared goals and make meaningful improvements. For example, enhanced spaces and experiences provided more opportunities for children to engage in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning, supporting their engagement and developing important life skills. Progress was regularly reviewed and further consideration should now be given to the impact of these to help identify the benefits for children and help support the ongoing continuous cycle of improvement.

Safe recruitment and an effective induction process helped staff feel confident in their role and supported children's safety. Newly recruited staff spoke positively about their induction, which was tailored to individuals and supported them to reflect on their practice over time. This approach had also been used to support staff who had changed roles within the setting, to support them in developing their skills and knowledge further. As a result, staff were skilled and passionate about children's learning.

Staff were committed to ongoing professional learning that reflected the needs of children and the setting. They used best practice guidance to inform their work and actively engaged in professional development opportunities. Many staff had achieved or were working towards additional qualifications. They described how training, including supporting children with additional support needs, and working alongside specialist

teachers, in areas such as music and art, enhanced their skills and confidence. This resulted in a knowledgeable and highly skilled staff team that effectively supported children's learning and development.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Playing, learning, and developing
We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement. Therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Children had fun and enjoyed playing across a range of spaces, both indoors and outdoors. Free flow access between areas supported children to make choices and lead their own play, helping them build on their interests. Children spent time taking part in a variety of experiences, including imaginative role play, painting, science experiments, and board games. Parents commented positively on the range of activities children could take part in. They shared, "We appreciate greatly the thought-through curriculum of RGC nursery mixed with the joy of play," "[My child] is encouraged and supported to explore [their] interests which the staff have taken the time to find out about," and "Wonderful opportunities [they have] for doing a range of things and learning."

A balance of planned experiences and child-led play supported a range of learning opportunities. Staff shared that they felt there was an improved balance between structured activities and free choice, enabling children to decide whether and how they participated. For example, many children chose to join a music session led by the music teacher, while others continued their play in other activities. This flexible approach promoted children's engagement and enjoyment in learning.

Spaces and resources had been thoughtfully developed to promote children's engagement and learning. As a result, children were actively involved in play throughout the day. The environment provided a range of experiences, including a quiet room that supported small group activities and helped children regulate their emotions. Early language and literacy development were well supported through stories, mark making opportunities, and regular French and Mandarin sessions. This enhanced children's communication skills, literacy development, and awareness of different cultures.

Children benefitted from high quality interactions that extended their learning and thinking. Staff skilfully built on children's interests and curiosity through responsive, age-appropriate approaches, including open-ended questioning and wondering aloud. They engaged meaningfully in children's play while recognising when to lead and when to step back, supporting children to explore and develop their own ideas. For example, staff joined children in a science investigation of ice, wearing laboratory coats and safety goggles to enhance engagement and promote curiosity.

Planning approaches effectively captured children's interests while maintaining a balance of child-led and planned learning opportunities. Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of children's development and reported increased confidence in contributing ideas through the embedded planning process. Learning intentions were tailored to children's stages of development, ensuring experiences provided appropriate support and challenge. Children's learning was reflected in daily practice and documented through floor books, helping to keep planning responsive and relevant. As a result, children were engaged in their learning, took pride in their contributions, and enthusiastically shared their experiences with others.

Observations of children's learning celebrated significant moments and were shared regularly with families through a digital platform. This provided parents with meaningful updates on their child's experiences.

Parents valued this communication, with their comments including, "They send daily reports in [their] learning journal and have shown me how much they've got to know [my child] in such a short space of time" and "Discuss regularly development areas for improvement and when asked what we can do at home we always get great ideas to help." Relevant next steps were identified to support children's progress and were evident in practice. However, these were not yet consistently recorded in learning journals. Leaders had recognised this as an area for improvement and were taking steps to strengthen recording processes. Embedding this further will improve the consistency of tracking and provide a clearer picture of children's progress over time.

Children's experiences were enhanced through meaningful connections to the outdoors and wider community. They made regular use of a range of outdoor spaces within the school grounds, supporting active play and learning. Children also explored the history of Robert Gordon through a tour of the school led by the nursery class teacher in preparation for the whole-school Founder's Day celebration. Families spoke positively about opportunities for outdoor learning, including planned weekly visits to the Countesswells playing fields as part of 'Wellbeing Wednesday'. One parent commented, "This is a fantastic opportunity with such a wide range of outdoor learning and play." As a result, children benefitted from broader learning experiences that supported their wellbeing and connection to the local community.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support
We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement. Therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Children were happy, settled, and confident in the setting. They experienced kind and caring interactions from staff who knew them well. Staff consistently spent time at children's level and were mostly responsive to children's cues, which supported positive interactions and relationships. A child shared, "At nursery I feel respected and everyone is kind to me" and a parent advised, "I feel the staff and the setting is very welcoming and caring towards my child."

Children and families were warmly welcomed into the setting. Families were invited into the room, which helped to create positive relationships with staff. They were very positive about their children's care. Their comments included, "Staff are welcoming and always greet us with a smile. They are kind, experienced, and nurturing. They know my child well and [they feel] valued as a pupil and we feel valued as a nursery family," "I feel I can go to any of them with questions, concerns, or just to chat. They are warm and welcoming," and "All the staff have had a very warm welcome and made both [my child] and us as parents very welcome."

Personal plans reflected children's current needs. They were developed and reviewed in partnership with families. Information about children's individual needs and interests was used effectively by staff to plan and provide responsive support. Where children required additional or more targeted support, appropriate plans were in place to ensure their needs were met. As a result, children experienced care and support tailored to their individual needs.

Embedded routines helped children understand what to expect and promoted emotional security. Daily routines were carefully planned to encourage active participation. For example, children helped prepare snack by measuring ingredients for making porridge and washing dishes. This supported them to anticipate what was happening next, develop practical skills, and be fully involved in meaningful everyday experiences.

Children experienced positive and sociable mealtimes. They could choose from a wide range of nutritious and appealing foods and ate together in the dining hall. Staff sat alongside children, encouraging conversation, supporting positive social interactions and role modelling healthy eating habits. This created a warm, inclusive atmosphere that promoted children's wellbeing and enjoyment of mealtimes. At times, transitions into lunch were longer than necessary, resulting in some children playing after washing their hands, which reduced the effectiveness of hand hygiene routines. We suggested that children should also be encouraged to wash their hands after eating to strengthen infection control approaches. This was discussed with the management team who were responsive and had already begun exploring ways to improve these transitions.

Transitions for children joining the setting and moving on to primary one were carefully planned and tailored to individual needs. Children benefitted from visits, personalised induction arrangements, and enhanced transition support, where required. Regular participation in wider school experiences, including outdoor learning, assemblies, and access to shared school spaces, helped children become familiar with the school environment. As a result, children experienced smooth, confident, and well supported transitions.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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